

THE NEW YEAR'S NIGHTS IN THE NEW YORK PLAYHOUSES

By LAWRENCE REAMER.
DAVID BELASCO'S unflinching flair taught him, of course, just the mood in which to treat "The Little Lady in Blue." It is a long time since anything so naive as this little comedy has been seen in New York. It even contains a soliloquy which has not been heard on the local stage for many a theatre night. It would have been, of course, destructive to any play of this kind to apply to it the most modern manner of production. Mr. Belasco took no such risk. He did drape his stage with chintz to put the spectators into the Old World mood of the play. Of his wonderful effects in lighting it is not possible to speak in too high praise, and they of course represent the last word in this department of stage science. But in other details the manager has kept to the way of production that the character of the play suggested.

There is, for instance, incidental music, as the programmes used to call it, heard remotely and faintly at different stages of the action. In the generally artificial atmosphere of the place Mr. Belasco maintains always the degree of informality necessary to accentuate the manners of certain of the characters. There is, for instance, in the admirable portrayal of George Giddens a toll for the ceremony and stiffness of his young master, and every character finds its pendant in order that its peculiarities may be sufficiently emphasized.

It is after seeing such a performance that one is delighted to acknowledge the supremacy of David Belasco among the American producers. "Here," one must say, "is theatre in the highest degree." Not a minute in the play lacks its adequate representation. One rarely leaves a playhouse without feeling that possibly one character or another might have been better acted. In the representation of "The Little Lady in Blue," however, there is no possible ground for such complaint. Its performance is perfect. There was never a greater credit to the skill of Mr. Belasco.

English playwrights have come to rely more on mere verbal juggling than they ever did in the past. The English Captain in "Great Catherine" laughs immoderately over the name of one of the court officials because it is "Popoff." If fun is to be made so easily there is no reason in the world why a playwright should not make every person in his dramatic personae gifted with some such eccentric name at which one might laugh. But it does not seem a very easy way of making fun.

J. M. Barrie is not above a use of the same device. In "A Kiss for Cinderella" it must be said that there is more bearing on the play since it is in a way to reveal character. The policeman in the artist's studio pronounces infallibly with the accent on the "i." He does it several times in fact, with laughter that naturally diminishes as the device begins to pall. Then there is more fun got out of mispronunciation when this same bobby pronounces "espionage" as a German word with both feet on the last syllable.

H. J. Byron and his contemporaries used to do wonders with the pun as a means of provoking laughter. But audiences would not even laugh now at such a specimen of this form of wit as, "Like Metamora both in face and feature, I never met a more amusing creature." Brougham's line, however, was considered rather notable in its way, even if not the way of the present. Since that time, however, there has been no enthusiasm for the mere verbal means of making the audience smile.

J. M. Barrie's fancy is growing more difficult to follow with every succeeding specimen of it which is put before the public. How it could possibly be supposed that any audience would take as humor the sight of the little *Cinderella* measuring a fat man and trying to cut him a coat after a fashion plate which she holds at arm's length.

A PLAY A WEEK.

GARRICK—The Theatre Francaise will present "Sapho," Alphonse Daudet's drama in five acts, with Gilda Darthy, Paulette Nozeman, Mitzie Marsa, Edgar Berman, Georges Saulieu, Robert Tourneur and Emile Detramont. For the Friday literary matinee "Les Precieuses Ridicules" and "Le Depot Amoureux" will be given.

LIVING PLACE—"Mamselle Nitouche," Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Beginning Thursday, "Die Schoens vom Strande," "Last children's matinee of Grimm fairy tale," "Frau Holle," on Monday.

HANDBOX—"Die Schoens vom Strande," with Ellen Dalloway, Kaethe Herold, Hens Linde, Ernst Robert and Bruno Schlegel until Thursday. Beginning Thursday, "Der Lebende Leichnam," by Tolstoy, with Director Christians in the title role.

STANDARD—"Very Good Edith," returns to the Standard Theatre for the second engagement this season. The cast will include Ada Lewis, Laura Hamilton, Mignon McGibney, Arthur Alesworth, Helen Redmond, George Mack, James Loundsbury, Eril Benham, Dorothy Sylvia and Elliot Taylor.

It is not easy to say. But this is exactly what one of the specimens of the whimsical Barrie humor in the piece is while others are nearly as difficult in the language of the stage "to get." So much that is humorous, pathetic and whimsical has been contributed by the Scotch author to the theatre that it is a little bit hard to take the same interest in the examples of his humor which the world is seeing to-day. But perhaps it is, after all, better to have the Barrie of "A Kiss for Cinderella" than no Barrie at all.

There is no exhibition of acting on the contemporary stage to-day so fine as Jose Rubens' contribution to the present programme at the Comedy Theatre. The Washington Square Players have frequently been congratulated on the quality of their plays. It is something new, however, for them to be receiving such praise for the quality of their acting. Yet as the cool and implacable victim of fate who is compelled to see his son killed in order that loyalty may be shown to the reigning family, Mr. Rubens' acting is superb in its indication of the resignation to inevitable fate, its delineation of the stoical philosophy of the oriental who sacrifices his feelings to his highest duties. There are no finer minutes in the contemporary theatre than those with which Mr. Rubens finishes "Bushido." This Japanese play appeals strongly to Western sympathies and balances delightfully the rarely interesting programme which is just now drawing large audiences to the Comedy Theatre. But they are no larger than the present programme deserves. It is most diverting and one never regrets spending an evening at the performances of the Washington Square Players.

NEW PLAYS OF THE FUTURE.

Novelties to Be Brought Out by the Managers.
 Lee Shubert and Percy Burton have decided, in deference to Julia Arthur's opening on New Year's night, to present "Gamblers All" for the first time at Maxine Elliott's Theatre at the matinee to-morrow. The gross receipts from this performance will be donated to the Star and Garter Hospital Fund, for the British wounded at Richmond, England, of which Lady Forbes-Robertson, the sister of Maxine

Elliot, is the president, and in which Miss Maxine Elliott herself is especially interested. The usual New Year's night performance will, of course, be given.

The title of this play is a descriptive one, but it must not be assumed that all the people in the play are literally "gamblers." Even members of the Stock Exchange might justifiably object to this appellation. The stock broker husband of the drama does object, inasmuch as he holds in detestation all forms of betting and all those who practice it. That is the reason why his wife accounts for her absence from home by a pretence of frequenting musical matinees and fashionable concerts, for which her husband has no taste, and had it not been for a motor accident he would not have followed her to a fashionable house in the West End of London and there found himself arrested by the police, who had chosen that particular night for raiding the establishment run by a notorious major and his wife.

The husband becomes the butt of his associates on the Stock Exchange, and that accentuates the odium that has arisen between his wife and himself. That his wife should have deceived him was a bitter pill to swallow; that he should be held up to ridicule he considers atrocious. In vain his wife pleads for forgiveness, and when lily repulsed, it is matter for surprise that she leads an unwilling captive to the love protestations of the mysterious Mr. Leighton!

And who is John Leighton? Before the end of the play every one knows that he is Amos, the fashionable money lender. And in the fourth act the dual personalities of Amos and Leighton become merged.

There are of course, various side



LOUISE MAYORGA AND MARY BOOTH IN "THE SHOW OF WONDERS"

issues in a story packed with human interest of both a sympathetic and humorous nature, and in these Britta Lascelles and Ronald Squires, a young English actor, who has no hitherto been seen here, have considerable scope.

The principal parts are played by John Milner, last seen in "The Heart of Wexona," and Muriel Starr, who has been winning laurels for herself in Australia in "Within the Law" and other plays, while Arthur Chesney plays the part of her husband on the Stock Exchange. An excellent all round company has been engaged for "Gamblers All" which had a long and very successful run at Wyndham's Theatre, London.

"Gamblers All" is in four acts, written by Mrs. May Martin, the daughter of Sir Charles Young, who wrote "Jim the Penman."

Julia Arthur will begin her New Year season Monday, New Year's night, at the Criterion Theatre in William Lindsay's "Seremonda," described as a romantic drama of southern France in the twelfth century, the Troubadour period, and the most picturesque in France's history. Miss Arthur has always inclined toward romantic plays, "A Lady of Quality" and "More Than Queen," the two productions she made before retirement from the stage, being of that type. She searched nearly a year for a starring vehicle before deciding upon "Seremonda."

The production has been made under the personal supervision and direction of Miss Arthur, who watched over all the preparatory work such as the preparation of authentic sketches for the scenery, accessories and costumes, and then the actual work on these equipments. Miss Arthur also cast and staged the production after a careful study of the history of the period. Mr. Lindsay, the author, spent two years in old Provence prior to the writing of the play, and he also assisted in the preliminary work of staging.

The story has been lifted, exclusive of the author's embellishments, from actual history of the red blooded life of the barons of this section of France. It is a romance of the prospective bride of a neighbor and being repulsed by the fair lady, *Seremonda*, kills his rival at the altar rail and drags the beautiful *Seremonda* off to his castle, where he forces her to marry him. As a penance for the murder *Itomion* is banished to the Crusades, and after several years of fighting in the Holy Land is reported dead. *Seremonda* has been left by *Raimon* in the care of his sworn *Squire*, and the pair discover their love for each other the very day *Raimon* returns from Palestine. The complications which ensue are calculated to give Miss Arthur an opportunity for several dances of the time have been incorporated in the production, and vaudeville artists with specially rehearsed acts have been impressed into service to lend color to some of the scenes.

"The Merry Wives of Windsor," with Thomas A. Wise, Constance Collier and Isabel Irving in the principal roles, will be a limited engagement at the Park Theatre on January 3. This is the first Shakespearean offering of the season, and the only one so far announced. A glance at the names in the fine cast assembled by Silvio Hein, the producer, is a guarantee of an exceptional production. It includes W. Lawson Butt, Alexander Onslow, Gordon Ruffy, Fuller Mellich, Auriel Lee, Vera Fuller Mellich, Bary Macoolim, Robert Craig, Robert Mantell, Jr., and Jack Terry. Vera Fuller Mellich, who plays pretty *Ann Page*, is the daughter of Fuller Mellich, who is also a member of the cast. Although Miss Mellich has had four years experience on the stage, this, oddly enough, is her first Shakespearean role.

"Her Husband's Wife," the comedy by A. E. Thomas which Henry Miller brings into the Lyceum Theatre one week from to-morrow evening, broke all records for Christmas week at the Grand Opera House in Toronto, according to reports which reached the Miller office last night. Mr. Miller accompanied the remarkable organization of internationally famous stars who appear in the play and conducted all rehearsals throughout the week's engagement in Toronto. With Mr. Miller were the author and Bertram Harrison, who gets the credit of having staged the play. "Her Husband's Wife" was originally produced in New York at the Garrick Theatre in May, 1915, with Mr. Miller in the cast. In the new company Henry Kolker will be seen in the part

created by Mr. Miller. Of the others Laura Hope Crews will again enact the role of the hypocritical wife, who is so sure she is about to die she elects a woman friend to be wife No. 2. Marie Tempest will be seen as the bride-elect. Others in the cast are W. Graham Brown, Eugene O'Brien and Norma Mitchell. "Her Husband's Wife" is the third play by Mr. Thomas

Current Productions.

Astor, "Her Soldier Boy"; Handbox, "Der Lebende Leichnam"; Belasco, "Little Lady in Blue"; Booth, "Getting Married"; Bramhall, "Keeping Up Appearances"; Casino, "Follow Me"; Century, "The Century Girl"; Cohan, "Come Out of the Kitchen"; Cohan & Harris, "Captain Kidd, Jr."; Cohan & Harris, matinee for children; Comedy, the Washington Square Players; Cort, "Upstairs and Down"; Criterion, "Seremonda"; Eltinge, "Cheating Cheaters"; Eltinge, Nora Bayes' matinee; Empire, "A Kiss for Cinderella"; Forty-eighth Street, "The Thirteenth Chair"; Fulton, "The Master"; Gaiety, "Turn to the Right"; Garrick, "Sapho"; Globe, "The Harp of Life"; Harris, "The Yellow Jacket"; Hippodrome, "The Big Show"; Hudson, "Shirley Kaye"; Irving Place, "Die Schoens vom Strande"; Knickerbocker, "The Music Master"; Little, "Pierrot the Prodigal"; Longacre, "Nothing but the Truth"; Lyceum, "Mile-a-Minute Kendall"; Manhattan Opera House, "Ben-Hur"; Maxine Elliott's, Gertrude Kingston Players; Neighborhood Playhouse, "The Married Woman"; New Amsterdam, "Miss Springtime"; Park, "Little Women"; Playhouse, "The Man Who Came Back"; Princess, Portmanteau; Punch and Judy, "Treasure Island"; Republic, "Good Gracious Annabelle"; Shubert, "So Long Letty"; Thirty-ninth Street, "Old Lady 31"; Winter Garden, "Show of Wonders."

Motion Pictures—Broadway, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea"; Liberty, "Intolerance"; Lyric, "A Daughter of the Gods"; Forty-fourth Street, Geraldine Farrar in "Joan the Woman."

where Mr. Miller has produced, the others being "The Rainbow" and "Come Out of the Kitchen." London has acclaimed "Her Husband's Wife" as the biggest success of the season, the English cast including Irene Vanbrugh, Marie Lohr, Dion Boucicault and Allan Ainsworth.

Life in Street Car Homes. Livingston Platt can make them artistic.

Those who have attended a performance of "So Long Letty" at the Shubert Theatre who have never been in the West have wondered why Mr. and Mrs. Robbins and their neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Miller, the leading characters in the entertaining farce with music, live in abandoned street cars. They agree that Oliver Moroco, the producer and coauthor of the play, has

her art for good, may I beg her to accept this expression of appreciation from one who has followed her career with an almost personal affection?
 Mrs. JESSIE B. CONNOR.

WHEREIN MR. DE MILLE EXCELS
 He Has the Genius of Doing the Small Thing Very Well.
 Out in Hollywood, where the motion picture flourishes, he has more power

provided something new in stage settings; a pleasing innovation far removed from the stereotyped "sets" familiar in most musical offerings. But Mr. Moroco has good authority for the novel scene shown in the two acts—the first outside and the second inside a street car.

To the westward of San Francisco on a sandy shore some eighteen miles from the Golden Gate, is a little settlement known as Carville. When electrically displaced horses as the motive power for street transportation an enterprising young man purchased some of the old street cars and had them shipped to the seashore. Then he bought for little or nothing strips of land on the beach and on them he placed his cars. When he had the cars into a semblance of a habitation he had no difficulty in renting them to campers for the summer months. Some of the tenants bought the little houses. The idea took hold; more cars were moved to the beach and some made into quite elaborate cottages. The authors of "So Long Letty" selected this little settlement as their locality, the surroundings being quite unusual and unique. To be sure, the interior of Mrs. Robbins' abode is somewhat larger and more luxurious than one would naturally expect inside an old fashioned street car, but that is dramatic license.

Livingston Platt, who designed the scenery, has taken full advantage of the unusual opportunities offered. For a charming adaptation of the "frame" that is more or less conventional with the newer stage craft, he uses an arch that mounts high toward the proscenium, and it is built to represent a considerable thickness. One might think that this device would obtrude itself; but such is the pleasing use in the arch itself, of simply graceful design and light variegated color, and such are the quantity, formal and colorful designs of the settings disclosed beyond, that the inner proscenium, for once at least, justifies itself.

The scene of the two street cars converted into beach houses, shown in the first act, naturally gave Mr. Platt an odd idea to start with. But while another scene painter might have designed the setting in nothing better than a fantastic sort of realism, Mr. Platt by combining a genuine sense of design and color with a sense of humor gets beauty and sufficient comic suggestion too. The two cars, connected by a diminutive bridge of signs, are delicately constructed, tinted in warm pinks and delicate greens, topped by designs in formal greenery and backed by a drop of deep blue sky.

THE NOVELTIES THIS WEEK.

MONDAY—Maxine Elliott Theatre, "Gamblers All," drama of London society life.
 Criterion Theatre, Julia Arthur in "Seremonda," a drama of life in old France, by William Lindsay.

more or less supreme. Cecil B. De Mille, who has just given to a rather expectant public his big photoplay based on the life of Joan of Arc entitled "Joan the Woman," in which Geraldine Farrar appears in the title role, is one of those who has succeeded in doing one kind of thing better than any one else.

Mr. De Mille it was who first put "continuity" into motion pictures; who taking advantage of all the experimental with the "cut back" and the "close up," which had been carried on in the years before he entered the field from the theatre of David Belasco, was the first to weld them together. He it was who stopped the universally ridiculous features which for years had made motion pictures more or less unbearable to a lot of perfectly sane persons because characters on the screen leaving one room with low shoes on their feet and returning later on their heads appeared an instant later in the next room with high boots on their feet and no hat on at all. The fact that the picture made in room 2 was probably taken a day or a week after the picture made in room 1 never seemed logical excuse to the public.

There was greater opportunity and room in the motion picture field for this particular kind of director than most persons realized. And there still is. While some directors became famous because of the big things they did, Cecil B. De Mille won his popularity slowly because of the little things—thousands of them—which he insisted upon doing in his numerous productions. If, as in "The Cheat," probably the most famous of all five part photoplays, Mr. De Mille's scenario demanded the interior of a Japanese home, the film showed the exterior, not a mere glimpse, but room after room, if only suggested by the angle with which the lens peered through the half open door in the background.

When Miss Farrar, who a year ago under Mr. De Mille's direction had appeared in the screen version of "Carmen," returned to the Lasky studios at Hollywood to act the character of Joan of Arc, Mr. De Mille again took her under his motion picture wing, so to speak, and "Joan the Woman," which was publicly shown for the first time at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre, New York, Christmas night, is the result.

Here again we are said to have that particular kind of thing which Mr. De Mille has, best of all directors, emphasized to a considerable degree. It is the little things—hundreds of them—in this historical picture which distinguish it. It required months of preparation on the part of a department of a score of more assistants to assemble copies of practically everything obtainable in Joan of Arc literature, heraldry and design. Even before the first photographs were made several hundred seamstresses were working daily on the several thousand costumes which were required.

An incident in this connection is interesting. It was necessary in order to provide suits of mail in sufficient number to purchase the entire output of a Pacific coast manufacturer of chain mail. It required months of preparation on the part of a department of a score of more assistants to assemble copies of practically everything obtainable in Joan of Arc literature, heraldry and design. Even before the first photographs were made several hundred seamstresses were working daily on the several thousand costumes which were required.

Cecil B. De Mille three years ago was a beginner at motion picture producing when he went to California to make the first picture for the Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company, of which he continues as director-general. To-day he is the head of one of the biggest studios in the world. Under his supervision are twelve directors, more than a score of stars, several hundred players and a thousand persons, more or less, besides. The Lasky laboratory and accessory shops cover acres of ground. And all because one man believed that more people saw the trees than saw the forest.

NEW YEAR'S EVE CONCERTS.
CENTURY—The first concert of the season will be given to-night with Raymond Hitchcock, the Brown Brothers and other stars appearing under the individual management of Ziegfeld and Dillingham joining "The Century Girl" cast, including Elsie Janis, Sam Bernard, Frank Tinney, Hazel Dawn, Leon Errol, Maurice and Watson, Doyle and Dixon, Harry Kelly, Van and Schenck and others.

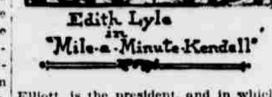
HIPPODROME—Favorite songs by favorite singers, each conducted by the composer who wrote it, will be the unique feature of the celebration at the Hippodrome, where the programme will be composed of grand opera, musical comedy, motion pictures, minstrelsy, concert music and vaudeville. Sybil Vane, Edith Helena, Emanuel List, Valli Valli, Raymond Hitchcock, Robert Warwick, Norma Talmadge, George Wilson, Matt Keefe, Joe Jackson, the Arnauts and others.

ASTOR—White and Clayton, Harry Tigue and Selva Janson, Walter Kelly, Marion Venable, Olli Gygli, Sidney Phillips, Clark and Verdi, Marie Nordstrom, Eugene and Willie Howard and the Casinos.

CASINO—The Casinos, the Howards, Sidney Phillips, Clark and Verdi, Marie Nordstrom, White and Clayton, John T. Murray, Harry Tigue and Selva Janson, Henry Lewis, the Gliding O'Meers and others.

WINTER GARDEN—Clifton Crawford, Taylor Holmes, Irene Franklin, the Howards, John Charles Thomas, Walter C. Kelly, Adele Rowland, Henry E. Killy, Henry Lewis, John T. Murray, Elida Morris, Ed Wynn, the Casinos, Clements and Dean, White and Clayton, Herbert Timberg, the Gardner Trio and the Gliding O'Meers.

ELTINGE—Nora Bayes, comedienne, in her two hours of song.



Edith Lyle in "Mile-a-Minute Kendall"



MURIEL STARR IN "GAMBLERS ALL"



JULIA ARTHUR IN "SEREMONDA"

